

The real news would have been if the President stood up to his political base and made meaningful recommendations for entitlement reform.

The people of Utah, and taxpayers around the country, would have stood up and listened if the President backed a serious rollback of domestic non-defense discretionary spending, which has exploded on his watch.

Instead, they got the economic philosophy of President Carter. Maybe that statement isn't fair to President Carter. I don't know. It seems like it has all the elements of fairness.

Ultimately, this spending crisis cannot be ignored, and both voters and markets will respond to the leaders who take this issue on in a serious way.

One of the problems with our colleagues on the other side and their wonderful desire to increase taxes on everybody is that those tax increases would not go toward paying down the deficit. They would go for more spending. That has been the case for all my 34 years in the Senate. Every time we have raised taxes, over the long run it has not gone toward bringing down the deficit. It has gone for more spending.

We Members of Congress have all kinds of ways of spending money, and our Father in Heaven knows we get a lot more credit for spending in this country up through the years than we do for conserving. On the other hand, I don't think there is much credit coming today. I think most everybody in America, including all those Democratic millionaires who supported the President last time—maybe not all of them but a good percentage of them—are saying: Enough is enough.

I am hoping the President will give a speech someday that will make a difference on spending because that is clearly the problem. It is not tax revenues, it is spending. I think we have had enough of that. I think the American people, whether they be Democrats or Republicans, have had enough of that. Even though we wish we could do more, we wish we could help more people, we wish we could provide a new car for everybody in America, I am sure, but that is not reality. It is time to face up to reality and get this government spending under control.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the period of morning business for debate only be extended until 6 p.m. this evening, with Senators during that period of time being allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each, and at 6 p.m. I be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are continuing to work on an agreement to move ahead on small business. We have three main amendments—I should not say “main,” but I think they are the ones on which we are focused. One is an amendment by Senator CORNYN, one by Senator HUTCHISON, and one by Senator SANDERS. There are others who now have come into the fray, and it is making it very difficult to get votes on these three amendments, but that is where we are.

It is unfortunate. I think each of these amendments were offered in good faith. We should be able to have a vote on them even though they have virtually nothing to do with the small business bill, but I am going to continue to work to see if I can get universal agreement to get these amendments disposed of either by passing or bringing them up and moving toward completion of this bill. We should have been able to do something in the last 2 days, but that is where we are.

Overhanging all this is the continuing resolution which we need to work on tomorrow. If people have any feelings about that, I wish they would come to the Senate floor to discuss it.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I watched with great interest President Obama's speech about our spending and debt crisis. That is what I would call it. He did not use as stark terms, unfortunately, but it is a spending and debt crisis.

First of all, I am at least a little encouraged that he is finally beginning to enter the debate about this crisis. It is headed to a crisis. It is the greatest domestic threat we face as a nation. At least this speech acknowledges it is a huge threat and that his own budget submitted a few months ago was a pass on all of those big issues and he needed a redo.

This is a great threat to all of our futures and prosperity. Let me try to put it in a little bit of perspective.

Borrowing right now is at least 40 cents out of every \$1 we spend. So for every \$1 the Federal Government spends, 40 cents of that—over 40 cents—is borrowed money. We are spending \$3.7 trillion a year, but we are only taking in \$2.2 trillion. Because of that, we have recently been racking up over \$4 billion of new debt every day. So every day: new debt of \$4 billion a day. And a whole lot of that we owe to the

Chinese, more than \$1 trillion. That eventually has very serious consequences in terms of our prosperity, our future, the sort of country and vision and future we can leave for our kids.

As interest rates go up—which they inevitably will if we stay on this path—that downright costs jobs. When interest rates go up 1 percent, Federal debt goes up \$140 billion because the debt is so much. When those interest rates eventually go up, it makes it harder for all of us and our families to buy cars and homes, to pay tuition, to create jobs if we are a small business.

ADM Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has said:

Our national debt is our biggest national security threat.

The highest ranking person in uniform in charge of our national security says our biggest security threat is not Iran or North Korea or anyone else; it is actually this domestic debt issue. Debt at current levels—which is 94 percent of GDP—economists say that is already costing us about a million jobs because our debt level is so great.

Again, at least the President, in his speech today—which is essentially a do-over of his budget from a few months ago—at least the President is beginning to acknowledge that fundamental threat, and that is good. But we need more than a speech, we need more than a vision. We need a real action plan, a detailed plan from the President, and we did not get that today.

So my first reaction to the speech was that it was just that: It was a speech. It was a nice sounding speech. It had a lot of nice themes. But it was a speech. If the President, who is so quick to criticize Congressman PAUL RYAN's budget—if he wants to enter the debate, he needs to enter it on a par with that level of detail, that level of specifics that Congressman RYAN and House Republicans gave. So the President needs to submit a new budget, a new detailed proposal, not just give a speech. Then we need to engage in a real debate and come up with a plan, an action plan, to tackle this spending and debt issue. And we need to do that before we vote on any debt limit increase.

Speaking for myself, I am not going to consider increasing the debt limit, which the President wants all of us to do, unless and until there is tied to it a real plan to deal with this spending and debt crisis. So this speech today, perhaps, was a start. But my general reaction is, we need more than a speech. We need specifics. We need a new budget submission. Then we need to engage in a bipartisan discussion and negotiation. But we shouldn't wait until May, as the President suggested. That should start immediately—tomorrow—because we need to hammer out meaningful details before any proposal comes to the floor for votes to increase the debt limit.

In terms of the general themes the President struck, I have to say I was

disappointed because, to my ears, it was the same-old same-old.

The first theme was increasing taxes. He has been at that theme over and over again, and that was absolutely the first theme he hit in his speech—increasing taxes. The problem is, if we look at the level of taxation we have, it is not extraordinarily low, it is not somehow way below normal historical averages. What is way above normal historical averages is spending. So if we just look at the data compared to history, we have a runaway spending problem; we don't have a taxation problem.

The second big theme the President hit was cutting defense spending. Again, coming from a liberal, this is just the same-old same-old—a traditional, predictable theme to cut defense. I don't think that is really a new approach or a new discussion from the President.

The third big theme was to cut tax expenditures. A lot of folks, at least in Louisiana, won't know what the heck that means, so let me translate. Cutting tax expenditures means increasing taxes. It means doing away with certain deductions and certain credits. It means your tax bill goes up. I am all for Tax Code simplification. I think we need an enormously simplified Tax Code. I do think we need to get rid of a lot of deductions and credits, but that should be used to lower the overall rate, particularly rates such as the corporate tax rate, which, in the United States, is the highest of any industrialized country in the world.

In terms of the theme of real cutting, that theme was very short on specifics but very long on general statements, including that entitlement spending—things such as Medicare—would not be covered in reform in any way.

So when we look at these broad themes—and that is all there was, broad themes, not specifics—it was, quite frankly, sorely disappointing. But perhaps at least it is a start. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, I hope it is a meaningful start, but to be a meaningful start and to produce fruit, we need to go from a very broad, very general speech to a detailed submission.

The President needs to resubmit his entire budget. This is a do-over, so he needs to resubmit a detailed budget which matches Congressman RYAN's proposal in the level of detail, in the level of specifics the Budget Committee chairman in the House has provided. Then we need to immediately get to a bipartisan discussion and negotiation. We shouldn't wait until May. That should start immediately for one simple reason: I don't think there is any chance of passing any increase to the debt limit without having attached to it major reform, major structural reform that ensures we are on a new path of lowering spending and lowering debt. Of course, I can only control one vote, but speaking for myself, I will say that I won't even consider those

proposals to increase the debt limit unless and until there is a proposal that passes the Congress to actually decrease the debt.

Ultimately, the problem isn't the debt limit; the problem is the debt. When an individual has a spending problem or a credit card problem, the solution isn't getting a higher limit on his credit card; the solution is to deal with the spending and the debt problem, which is the underlying, core problem. The same here.

So we need to do that as we move forward in this debt-limit discussion. I hope we will all do that. I hope we will come together in a meaningful, bipartisan way to do that—to actually attack the problem, which is spending, which leads to the second problem, which is debt, and actually propose and pass real structural reform before we even have any vote on increasing the debt limit. I urge all of my colleagues to work constructively in that regard. I hope the President's speech is a start toward that, but, of course, time will tell, and actions versus words are what ultimately matter.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, today more than 47 million Americans rely on Medicare for their health care. For more than 45 years, seniors have had access to the affordable, dependable health care Medicare provides.

We all recognize the cost of health care. We know it is growing and growing too rapidly. The landmark health reform law we passed recently took bold steps to rein in costs, and I am eager to work with my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to further reduce health care costs, increase efficiency, and root out the fraud and waste.

Last week, the chairman of the House Budget Committee, Congressman PAUL RYAN, proposed a plan that would end Medicare as we know it. Rather than providing affordable health care paid for by Medicare, as is the case today, under the Ryan plan, seniors would receive a voucher to purchase private health insurance—again, not health care benefits provided for under Medicare but, rather, receive a voucher to purchase private health insurance from private health insurance companies.

Unfortunately, this voucher would fall far short of covering health care costs for seniors. According to the independent Congressional Budget Office, under the Ryan plan, “Most elderly people would pay more”—I might add, much more—“for their health care than they would pay under the current Medicare system.” How much more? CBO says that under the Ryan plan, the average 65-year-old would have to pay \$12,000 a year to receive the same level of benefits Medicare offers today—\$12,000 a year. That is more than double what a senior would have to pay under today's Medicare. So the Ryan plan would double the payments seniors have to make and the benefits would be reduced.

Under the Ryan plan, there would be no guaranteed benefits, which are provided under Medicare today. As a result, private insurance companies would dictate what care a senior received, ending the current doctor-patient relationship.

Our deficit, of course, is serious. It is very serious. It must be addressed. While we need to look for more ways to reduce our deficit, we need to do so in a balanced and fair way. For starters, we shouldn't balance the budget on the backs of seniors. We will not allow Medicare to be dismantled—not on our watch. Yesterday, Senator BILL NELSON and I introduced a sense-of-the-Senate resolution stating that “Medicare should not be dismantled and turned into a voucher or premium-support program.”

Deficit reduction should not simply shift costs to seniors, and that is exactly what the vouchers in the Ryan budget would do. A voucher system does nothing to lower health care costs. It does not guarantee the benefits Medicare offers today. It does not provide access to affordable health care. Seniors deserve much better.

I listened closely to my colleague from Louisiana a few moments ago. Frankly, I am somewhat heartened. I heard from him that he wants to move forward and that he would, he said indirectly, vote to increase the debt limit if there is a credible plan to reduce deficits and our national debt. I think that is a proposal with which the vast majority of Members of this body agree. Of course, the proof is in the pudding. It is, what is that credible plan, what is that mechanism, what is that assurance that we are going to reduce the budget deficits prior to a vote to increase the debt limit?

It is very important that a vote to increase the debt limit occur without brinksmanship. We had far too much brinksmanship in the lead-up to the continuing resolution. It was just a matter of \$2 billion or \$3 billion in the last eleventh hour.

The vote to increase the debt limit is a far more important vote. The stakes are much, much higher. The dollar amount is much greater. The financial markets will be watching very closely. And we, as Members of Congress, working with the President, must find a way to get the debt limit increased but with assurance that we are going to get deficits down and the debt down in a credible way, in a proper period of time so we don't have to push up to that final moment, the final minute before the vote on the debt limit occurs.

As I listened to my colleague from Louisiana, I sensed that he wants to find some way—and I think we all do; that is our challenge; that is our charge over the next couple of months—find that mechanism, find that process that is credible, that makes sense, and that both sides can buy into, not knowing exactly what the final result will be but knowing we are starting down a road to get the budget

deficit under control in a balanced and fair way.

I do not mean to sound critical, but I don't think the Ryan budget proposal is balanced. I don't think it is fair. But I do think the vast majority of the Members of the Senate do want to find a fair and balanced solution, and it is up to us to find that before a vote on the debt limit occurs.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, this afternoon, after a few days of great anticipation, the President laid out his version for long-term deficit reduction and dealing with our long-term debt. Now that we have heard from him, I am afraid we are left with more questions than answers.

Let me be clear. I welcome the President to the debate. I think it is a positive sign. There is no more pressing issue for us to address than our dire fiscal situation and our economic challenges; both are intertwined. We are not going to be able to move the economy until we deal with our impending debt crisis, and we cannot deal with fiscal problems without growing the economy.

There has been a lot of good discussion about the unique dangers we face if we don't address our massive deficits and our debt which has now accumulated to over \$14 trillion. That amount, by the way, is equal to the entire size of the U.S. economy, making this the first time since World War II that we have had a debt of that level. It is also a lot different now than it was then.

During World War II our debt was driven primarily by defense spending which would be quickly curtailed. We weren't looking at the incredible unfunded obligations, such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security that we have today. That is an unfunded obligation of over \$100 trillion. So we are in uncharted territory, unprecedented times. It is harming our economy today and, of course, it will devastate it in the future if we don't take action.

Economists tell us that with a debt of 90 percent of GDP we will typically lose 1 point of economic growth. Again, this year our gross debt is 100 percent of our GDP. By the way, a 1-percent reduction in our GDP in America means about 1 million jobs. So, already, with a gross debt of 100 percent of GDP, we have foregone jobs that we need in Ohio and around the country.

This high indebtedness also comes with significant interest payments. Of course, even with interest rates being near zero today, the magnitude of the U.S. debt still requires a debt service

this year of over \$200 billion. By the way, under the President's budget that number increases to almost \$1 trillion 10 years from now based on the CBO analysis. That is \$1 trillion a year just in interest payments on the debt.

What concerns me is that interest rates could well go up given this climate. A 1-percent increase in interest involves another \$130 billion of interest payments. Think about that. Just a 1-percent increase in interest rates means another \$130 billion in interest payments. Obviously, inflation would be causing additional damage to an already precarious budget situation, and that is another great risk that we face.

Our current deficits are also increasingly financed by foreign holders of U.S. debt. At present, nearly half of U.S. publicly held debt is held by foreign investors. As U.S. deficits are increasingly foreign-financed, of course, our interest payments are leaving the country. It is estimated that in 2010 interest payments to foreign entities and foreign individuals amounted to over \$140 billion. That is based on the new data from the Department of Commerce. It is not just about these high debt payments, it is the fact that a lot of it is going overseas.

Our persistent deficits and pending debt crisis also introduces a lot of uncertainty into our economy. Some immediate evidence of this effect appears on the balance sheets of America's businesses, which shows \$1.9 trillion in liquid holdings. That means money is sitting on the sidelines rather than being invested in jobs, plants, and equipment. Resolving the uncertainty surrounding future deficits will induce greater investment as companies can plan more effectively.

We are already seeing these concerns manifest themselves in our economy today. Capital markets are responding as investors, such as PIMCO, the largest holder of U.S. Treasuries, is out altogether, telling us they no longer trust U.S. debt. What will happen if we don't address these challenges is even more daunting.

According to the CBO, assuming the continuation of many current policies, debt held by the public as a share of our GDP is projected to reach an implausibly high 947 percent of GDP by 2084. Of course, that won't happen. The United States will face a debt crisis long before that, but that demonstrates the unsustainability of the current fiscal situation. No economic model could tell us what the economy would look like in the future because by then these models will essentially fall apart.

Over time the accumulation of debt increases the cost of debt service, consuming a greater share of revenues, limiting budgetary resources for other priorities or for meeting unforeseen emergencies, such as a natural disaster or a war.

As time progresses a fiscal crisis resulting from high indebtedness could occur rapidly as investors lose con-

fidence in U.S. Treasuries. Absent immediate policy changes, the United States would have to pay higher yields on its own debt to roll over existing debt and avoid default. We are going to have to pay higher interest rates to attract investors to our country. In addition to the cost of an increase in interest expense, higher interest rates, of course, would be devastating for American families. Think about it. As interest rates go up, because Treasury rates go up, this means home mortgages go up. This means college loan payments go up. This means interest rates on car loans go up and on credit card activity and other loans. The economy is tough enough. We don't need higher interest rates, but that is upon us unless we act now.

The magnitude of the debt crisis would escalate as higher interest costs require additional borrowing at high rates to continue to make interest payments, which would ultimately grind the economy to a halt as investors lose confidence in the ability of the United States to repay. The global impact of a U.S. debt crisis would be far reaching and truly unprecedented. We just went through a tough recession. We don't need to relive that.

All things being equal, debt financing of current consumption necessarily imposes future obligations on subsequent generations either in the form of higher taxes or reduced consumption of government services. To avoid a debt crisis, any policy changes must begin sooner rather than later to minimize those effects that are, unfortunately, likely to happen even if we act.

Given the threats and the crisis described, there is no doubt that America needs real leadership to address this fiscal threat. While we can debate some of the specifics in Congressman RYAN's budget, there is no doubt that the House Republican plan demonstrates necessary leadership on the severe fiscal challenges our country faces. This is in contrast to the plan President Obama sent to the Congress just 2 months ago. It not only rejects the serious recommendations from his own fiscal commission, but, unfortunately, as Erskine Bowles, the Democratic co-chair of the President's Commission said: "It goes nowhere near where they will have to go to resolve our fiscal nightmare."

Unfortunately, the President's speech today provides no specifics as how to resolve that fiscal nightmare.

More spending, more borrowing, and more taxes are not a prescription for spending constraint and economic growth. Since President Obama took office, we have seen trillions in new spending and record deficits. The February budget I talked about just locks that new spending in place, doing nothing to pull back from this dangerous spiral of debt.

Let us be clear, this is not just a budget issue, it is an economic issue, and it is definitely a jobs issue. Not only will debt and deficit have a long-

term impact on our children and grandchildren who will have to foot the bill for today's spending, but we are beginning to see this immediate impact on economic stability and job growth as the cost of our debt begins to crowd out private sector investment. We have to move quickly to substantially reduce the debt and deficit to strengthen our fiscal house and, in doing so, foster job creation in States such as mine—Ohio—and around the country.

The Commission's plan that the President rejected in December cuts deficits by about \$4.1 trillion compared to the baseline of current policy over a 10-year period. It brings our deficits to 1.2 percent of our economy by 2020. Compare that to today, where we are at almost 10 percent of our economy. So it sets a standard—over \$4 trillion in reductions in the deficit and an annual deficit that is 1.2 percent, which incidentally is where our budget deficit was about 4 years ago. Congressman RYAN's budget got there by bringing deficits down by about \$4.2 trillion by 2021, as compared to a comparable baseline, to the Commission's report—so \$4.1 trillion, \$4.2 trillion—and the deficit is about 1.5 percent of GDP.

The President's own budget, again submitted here to Congress about 2 months ago, is very different. His budget merely gets one-quarter of the way there—\$1.1 trillion—and that assumes all the administration's claimed savings occur and it assumes, frankly, there is a higher rate of economic growth than the Congressional Budget Office thinks there will be, which actually wipes out the deficit savings the President claims.

So we have very different visions, don't we? We have the fiscal commission on the one hand and the Ryan budget in the \$4 trillion range and then a plan by the President that does not get us moving forward in terms of deficit reduction—in effect, doubles the debt in the next 10 years.

Evidently, after seeing Republicans move forward last week and now this week in the House and after seeing how, on a bipartisan basis and around the country, people reacted to his budget, President Obama has realized he needs to move forward with a new proposal. In a sense, he is asking for a mulligan, and I think that is good. I think it is good he has acknowledged this problem is deeper and more serious than his budget proposal indicated, and we need to move forward together.

Unfortunately, again, the President did not offer specifics today, unlike the Ryan budget, which takes some bold and courageous and tough steps but does offer specifics. The President chose instead to squander his opportunity to offer a real way forward on tackling our structural fiscal problems. He did talk about \$4 trillion in deficit reduction—and I appreciate that—but again did not offer a way to get there. The national commission he formed, and which reported in December, told the President there was a way to get

there, and I hope the President will relook at his own Commission and other proposals, such as the Ryan proposal.

As the President made clear, we have been debating just 12 percent of the budget. He is right about that. There is some defense spending that is involved, but for the most part it is a very small part of the budget. So what does his proposal do to address these additional challenges? I didn't hear anything today about serious proposals to address the entitlement programs, which are incredibly important programs but on an unsustainable footing.

On Medicare, the President proposed delegating future unspecified savings to a government board—unelected and unaccountable. On Medicaid, the President seems to be delegating responsibility to the National Governors Association. On Social Security, the President told us today it doesn't contribute to our deficit, despite the fact the program is in cash deficit this year by \$45 billion—\$45 billion less in payroll taxes than the payments going out.

The President proposed \$4 trillion in deficit reduction. Yet he has shrunk, at this point, from the responsibility of telling us how he would achieve it, except that he would leave the challenge largely to others, while pursuing tax increases that I fear would harm the little recovery we see coming out of this deep recession.

So I look forward to working with Members on both sides of the aisle and the President to address the serious challenges we have talked about today. I wish we had seen more specifics today, but I am encouraged to see that at least the President is engaging in the game. I welcome his involvement because it is too important for us not to have involvement from both sides of the aisle. Without White House leadership, we cannot move forward.

As the President so often says, let's get focused not on the next election but on the next generation.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, the Senate will have before it today or tomorrow, depending upon the flow around here, two very misguided bills. This will come about when we have our budget come up for a vote. Under an agreement to get that budget up, we are going to have a vote on two separate bills. One bill would totally repeal and defund the affordable care act—the health care reform bill we passed—and the other one would prevent funding for Planned Parenthood. So I wish to take a few minutes on the floor of the Senate to speak about how misguided these two bills are.

First, let me talk about the bill that would defund the affordable care act. This bill we will be voting on will prohibit any funds appropriated this year and any funds appropriated in any prior year from being used to carry out the affordable care act. This would re-

move the engine from health care reform while the train is steaming down the track.

So, again, why are we voting on this? The reason is, Republicans have tried a frontal assault on the affordable care act—a debate on the merits—and they failed. This body voted down Senator MCCONNELL's amendment to the FAA authorization bill that would have repealed health reform in its entirety. But I guess what we can't do directly, we try to do indirectly. So now the Republicans are trying to undermine health reform by other means, such as defunding it.

Well, this strategy only makes sense if you are absolutely obsessed—obsessed—with tearing down health care reform. Make no mistake about it, this bill is the equivalent of repeal. By depriving the bill of all funding, it would turn back the clock on all we have accomplished over the past year.

It would take us back to the bad old days, when insurance companies were in the driver's seat, telling us what kinds of health care we are entitled to and when we are entitled to it.

Instead of protecting all Americans against arbitrary limits on coverage, repeal would take us back to the days when insurance companies could turn off our coverage just when we are the sickest. That would hurt families such as the Grasshoffs from Texas, who testified before my committee earlier this year. They were unable to find coverage that would pay for their son's hemophilia treatment until the affordable care act banned lifetime limits.

Instead of allowing young people starting a new job or a new business or going off to school to stay on their parents' insurance until age 26, repeal would make them fend for themselves in a chaotic market that offers too little coverage for too much money. That would hurt folks such as Emily Schlichting, who suffers from a rare autoimmune disorder that would make her uninsurable in the bad old days. But because of the affordable care act, she is able to stay on her parents' policy until she is 26. Yet at a HELP Committee hearing in January—this is Emily, a wonderful young woman—she said:

Young people are the future of this country and we are the most affected by the reform—we're the generation that is most uninsured. We need the Affordable Care Act because it is literally an investment in the future of this country.

It would also hurt folks such as Carol in Ankeny, IA, whose 19-year-old daughter was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes 9 years ago. Thanks to the affordable care act, Carol doesn't have to worry about her daughter's preexisting condition, disqualifying her for insurance coverage, and she can stay on her parents' health insurance coverage after college.

Carol also doesn't have to worry about the cost of her daughter's care running up against the lifetime cap that would be imposed by an insurance

company. Health care reform banned those limits. Carol wrote me a very nice letter to say thank you for doing the right thing.

Instead of protecting nearly half of nonelderly Americans who have pre-existing conditions—such as high blood pressure, diabetes or heart disease—from denial of coverage, repeal would put insurance companies back in the driver's seat, picking and choosing whom to cover.

Instead of helping small businesses, struggling in this recession with the cost of insurance premiums, repeal of the affordable care act would take away \$40 billion in tax credits that reduce premiums for small businesses.

Instead of helping all Americans prevent illness or disease by providing free preventive services such as mammograms and colonoscopies, repeal would allow insurers to charge expensive copays for these important services, thus discouraging people from getting their colonoscopies or mammogram screenings.

If we pass this bill—this bill to defund the affordable care act—Congress will turn its back on America's seniors, tossing our hard-won improvements in Medicare benefits and damaging the program's fiscal health. It would reopen the Medicare Part D doughnut hole, exposing millions of seniors to the full cost of drugs when they need the most assistance. Repealing the affordable care act would increase seniors' drug prices, on average, by more than \$800 this year and \$3,500 over the next 10 years.

Repeal would roll back the unprecedented investment the affordable care act makes in Medicare fraud prevention. Turning back the affordable care act would hurt seniors' access to health care in rural areas by eliminating incentive payments that are in the affordable care act paid to rural primary care providers.

Repealing—or defunding, as this bill would do—the affordable care act would roll back improvements to Medicare payment policy, coordination, and efficiency that extends the life of the Medicare trust fund by a decade. In addition, Secretary Sebelius has informed us that payments to Medicare providers would be significantly disrupted by this bill, which again will defund the affordable care act.

Finally, we come to the part of this debate even Alice in Wonderland would have a tough time understanding. The House Republicans have played the Washington stage for all it is worth over the last few weeks, making great solemn speeches to the balconies and to the audiences about the deficit and the debt. But as a condition for agreeing to fund the government for the remainder of this year, what are they demanding? They want to defund and, thus, repeal the affordable care act—one of the best and biggest deficit-reducing measures in decades.

The Affordable Care Act reduces the deficit by \$210 billion in the next 10

years, more than \$1 trillion in the next 10 years. Again, here is a chart that shows that. In the next 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the Affordable Care Act will reduce the deficit by \$210 billion. Therefore, if you repeal it you would increase the deficit by \$210 billion.

Here is where the real savings come. In the next decade the Congressional Budget Office says the Affordable Care Act will reduce the deficit by \$1 trillion. So if you defund it, as this bill would do, you will increase the deficit by \$1 trillion. That is what the Republicans want, they want to absolutely increase the deficit. They must, because they want to do away with the Affordable Care Act.

Let me get this straight. The Republicans are proposing to reduce the deficit by—increasing the deficits? As I said, somehow I have a feeling when I hear that, we are not in Kansas any longer. This is “Alice in Wonderland” kind of thinking.

We have to stop the silly game. This debate is not about deficit reduction, it is about tearing down health reform, no matter what. No matter if it does increase the deficit, get rid of it, get rid of health reform. It is about giving control back to wealthy, powerful health insurance companies that can raise your rates, deny you benefits, and make increasingly more profit.

Nothing makes the nature of the agenda of my friends on the Republican side more clear than the 2012 proposed budget released by the Republican House Budget Committee chairman last week. The Republican budget plan is very simple: a massive transfer of wealth from low- and middle-income Americans to the wealthiest in our country. Two-thirds of the budget savings in the Republican budget proposal come from drastically cutting programs that serve those with modest means, while permanently extending President Bush's tax cuts for the rich.

How is this massive wealth shift paid for? They would repeal the majority of the Affordable Care Act, taking coverage away from more than 32 million Americans who would be covered under current law. Starting in 2022, the Republican budget proposal eliminates Medicare as we know it, turning over the program to private health insurance companies. Instead of enrolling seniors in Medicare, the Republicans' plan would give them a voucher to go out and buy private insurance coverage on the open market. Since the voucher would not keep up with rising medical costs, seniors would fall farther and farther behind.

The Congressional Budget Office has said this would more than double out-of-pocket costs for seniors entering the program in 2022; it would triple the costs by 2030. Where would that money go? To the private health insurance industry. That sounds kind of familiar, doesn't it?

The Republicans' obsession with repealing the new health reform law is

not based on budgetary considerations. It is based strictly on ideology. In 1965, President Johnson and this Congress passed Medicare, ensuring seniors access to decent health care. Republicans fought it bitterly then and 45 years later they are still trying to undo it. Here they go again. The choice before us is to go forward or to be dragged backward. Let us come together as a united American people, create a reformed health care system that works not just for the healthy and the wealthy but for all Americans.

There is a second bill we will be voting on in conjunction with the budget. The Republicans insisted on this in order to have a vote on the budget. It is equally as misguided and as dangerous, I think, as the other bill. This second bill would prohibit a law-abiding and extraordinarily successful organization from participating in fair competition for Federal funding. This entity would, of course, be Planned Parenthood.

Again, let's be clear what this bill is not about. It is not about the need to prevent Federal funds from being used to pay for abortions. Longstanding rules under the title X program already strictly prohibit the use of taxpayer dollars to fund abortions. What is more, every appropriations bill for the last two decades has stated that no funds can be used for any abortion.

This bill is not about abortion. It is about banning a specific organization from even competing for Federal funds, simply because some people don't agree with that organization. This would create a very disturbing and dangerous precedent. When Congress creates a program, it typically specifies rules or criteria for participation in that program. Anyone who or any organization that agrees to play by these rules and criteria is eligible to compete. Planned Parenthood is playing by the rules. That is one reason it is one of the most widely respected health care providers in the United States.

Of 5.2 million women served every year by the title X program, 1 out of 3, 31 percent, receive care at Planned Parenthood health centers. If someone can show me a specific clinic that is not following the rules, by all means take away their funding. But that is not what this bill does. This bill says Planned Parenthood as an entity would be banned from even competing to provide services under title X, despite the fact that they conform to all of the rules of the program.

It doesn't only ban Planned Parenthood from offering family planning services. That is one aspect of what Planned Parenthood does. But this bill would turn away nearly 1 million women a year who receive cervical cancer screenings through Planned Parenthood clinical services, as well as 830,000 women every year who get breast exams at Planned Parenthood clinical services. They would turn away countless hundreds of thousands

of women and men who receive physical exams and immunizations at Planned Parenthood clinical services.

My office has been deluged by e-mails and phone calls from Iowans and other Americans who oppose this misguided effort to ban Planned Parenthood from receiving funding under title X. I stand with them in support of the important services these clinics provide to women and men throughout the country.

A constituent of mine writes:

Dear Senator Harkin,

I want to let you know that cutting funds to Planned Parenthood will jeopardize the lives of many of the women and some of the men who go there for basic reproductive health screenings. I say this with confidence, as Planned Parenthood was the only clinic I could afford 10 years ago, to obtain yearly Pap smears. It was Planned Parenthood that found my cervical cancer and referred me to a specialist for treatment. Due to the existence and actions of Planned Parenthood, I am alive today as a healthy and contributing member of society. I work with undergraduate and graduate students, and several of them have mentioned that Planned Parenthood was their only option for affordable screenings. . . . Please ensure that government funding will be allocated to Planned Parenthood. Please do not have young or socioeconomically strapped women potentially lose their life over a cancer that is remedied when caught in its early stages.

That was the end of her letter. We need to listen to voices such as this. We need to listen to the women of America who rely on Planned Parenthood.

Finally, I believe this bill goes to the heart of whether we can reach common ground on something on which we should all agree, the need to find ways to reduce the need for abortions in America. Let me say at the outset I strongly believe that we must preserve the right of every woman to her own reproductive choices that exist under the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*. But to reduce the number of abortions we must prevent unwanted pregnancies, just as we must also support women who want to carry their pregnancies to term. That is precisely what title X funding accomplishes. Family planning services at title X health centers, including Planned Parenthood, prevent an estimated 973,000 unintended pregnancies a year and this in turn obviates what a woman might turn to in desperation, for hundreds of thousands of abortions every year.

Unfortunately, during the debate on Planned Parenthood in recent days we have heard many wild and inaccurate claims about the work of this dedicated organization. On that score, I have always agreed with my former colleague, the late Senator Pat Moynihan, who said, "People are entitled to their own opinions but they are not entitled to their own facts." Last week our distinguished colleague, the junior Senator from Arizona, stood here on the floor of the Senate and stated that abortion "is well over 90 percent of what Planned Parenthood does." He stated it right here on the Senate floor, the junior Senator from Arizona.

Of course that is grossly inaccurate. Planned Parenthood spends the overwhelming majority of its resources keeping women healthy and preventing the need for abortion in the first place. The fact—the fact—is that just 3 percent of Planned Parenthood services are related to abortion.

When news organizations asked the office of the Senator from Arizona for evidence of his claim, a spokesperson bizarrely stated: "His remark was not intended to be a factual statement." What was it intended to be? The floor of the Senate is not the place for destructive and false assertions, especially when used to argue that an organization should be redlined and singled out for discrimination.

For the record, Planned Parenthood is one of the most respected women's health organizations in the United States. It courageously defends the right of women in America to make informed, independent decisions about their health and family planning. By providing women with counsel and contraception, Planned Parenthood prevents countless unwanted pregnancies and thereby reduces the number of abortions in this country. Lest there be any misunderstanding, I intend this as a factual statement.

Let me conclude by making clear that the one certain impact of this bill, if it were passed, would be to increase the number of abortions in America. This bill would dramatically erode the effectiveness of title X in preventing unintended pregnancies, preventing sexually transmitted infections, detecting cancers early, keeping people healthy through quality preventive care. It would have this impact because this misguided bill would ban an extraordinarily successful organization, Planned Parenthood, from providing these services.

On this bill we have to say no to unintended pregnancies and unnecessary abortions; say no to this misguided and counterproductive bill.

We will have this vote on the budget but then we have these two side votes, one that would defund the Affordable Care Act and send us back to the bad old days of health insurance companies deciding who gets what when at insanely big profits to them; second, it would ban Planned Parenthood from even applying to be a provider of health resources and services to 5.2 million women every year in this country.

I hope that Congress, the Senate, will rise above these misguided bills, will rise above unfactual assertions made on the floor of the Senate no matter how they were intended, and that we will make sure Planned Parenthood can continue to provide the vital services it does in this country.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant editor of the *Daily Digest* proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, after much drama and anticipation late last Friday night, literally minutes before the government was scheduled to shut down, as we all know, a deal was struck to pass a weeklong continuing resolution and keep the government operating. That was the seventh continuing resolution we have passed since the start of the fiscal year last October.

Now we are appearing to consider the eighth and final continuing resolution to fund the government for the remaining 5 months of the fiscal year. Amazing. Eight continuing resolutions were necessary to fund the government for 1 year because my friends on the other side of the aisle neglected to bring a single one of the annual appropriations bills to the floor for consideration last year.

As my colleagues know, in addition to continued funding for all government operations, the measure we will consider tomorrow includes appropriations for the Department of Defense for the remainder of the fiscal year. Unfortunately, on top of the typical run-of-the-mill Washington budget gimmickry, this agreement also contains a gross misallocation of imperative defense resources.

The Defense Department funding portion of this bill proposes \$513 billion for the routine operations of the Department of Defense and approximately \$17 billion in military construction, for a total of \$530 billion. This amount is \$19 billion less than the President's fiscal year 2011 budget request for the Defense Department and its related military construction projects and \$10 billion less than the \$540 billion the Secretary of Defense had testified was the minimum amount the Department needed to execute its national defense mission.

In addition, this bill also funds an additional \$157.8 billion for overseas contingency operations, or war funding, to support our troops in combat, consistent with the President's budget request.

I might add that the amounts Secretary Gates described as essential in January did not foresee that the United States would expend more than \$650 million enforcing the no-fly zone in Libya, an amount that will most likely increase over the remaining months of the fiscal year.

While this may seem like a defense funding level that we can live with in a tough fiscal climate bill, the bill is not what it appears to be on the surface.

As the Secretary of Defense pointed out last week, funding to support the warfighter is degraded in this bill because billions in the war-funding accounts—my staff has estimated close to \$8 billion—have been allocated by the Appropriations Committee for new spending not requested by the administration or transferred to pay items

that were originally requested in the base budget for nonwar-related expenses. For instance, the bill shifts \$3.2 billion in nonwar funding to the war-funding account to artificially lower defense spending for day-to-day operations but by doing so reduces funds for the warfighter. Here is an example. The appropriators have added \$495 million for nine additional F-18s and funds them as part of the war-funding budget even though we have not lost any F-18s in the current conflicts.

Additionally, the appropriators added \$4.8 billion in unrequested funding to the war-funding part of the Defense bill for programs and activities that the President and Secretary Gates did not seek. For example, \$192 million was added for additional missile defense interceptors. There was no administration request for these funds. And missile defense expenses are in no way related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So this bill uses gimmicks and shell games to artificially lower the defense base budget rather than playing by the rules and actually demonstrating our commitment to fiscal responsibility. By doing so, it takes away billions of dollars that were originally requested for ongoing combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to support our troops where it is most needed.

Within the \$19 billion lower top line of the base defense budget, this bill continues business as usual with cuts exceeding \$5 billion to the amounts the President and Secretary Gates requested for critical defense programs in order to pay for over \$3.7 billion in unjustified and unexplained increases to other accounts.

In addition to these shifts away from the Department of Defense priorities, this bill also adds over \$1.4 billion for projects that were not requested by the Department and are not considered core activities of the Department of Defense.

Let me give you examples of those misallocated resources. It includes \$473 million in non-Department of Defense medical research not requested in the President's budget; \$227 million in other medical research related to Department of Defense fields but not requested by the Pentagon; \$550 million for local roads and schools not requested by the administration. It adds an additional \$3.7 billion in program increases not justified by an unfunded request by the service chiefs or by the administration; adds unrequested funds for the Red Cross, \$24 million; Special Olympics, \$1.2 million; youth mentoring programs, \$20 million. These are good programs, but they have no place in the Department of Defense. They should be in other areas. It cuts about \$1 billion in military construction requested in the President's budget, including \$258 million for projects in Bahrain, the headquarters of the Navy's Fifth Fleet. It adds a reporting provision designed to be the first step in forcing the National Guard to buy

firefighting aircraft rather than lease commercially available aircraft. It authorizes a multiyear procurement of Navy MH-60 helicopters.

I want to be clear here. I know that cancer research is a popular cause on a bipartisan basis and that it has value in the larger scheme of things. I am not against funding for medical research to fight the scourge of cancer and other diseases. I support funding for these programs that are requested by the administration for the Department of Health and Human Services. But this sort of general medical research funding has no place in a defense bill. Placing it there, which the appropriators have done year after year, undercuts the fiscal responsibility and prioritization process we expect our Federal agencies to undertake when allocating scarce resources.

So the Department of Defense is not only getting a significantly lower amount in its 2011 budget—\$19 billion below what it asked for to support its routine operations and carry out its day-to-day national security mission and \$10 billion below what Secretary Gates said in January was essential for the Department's ability to continue to function, but it is also being directed to spend about \$8 billion in funding for items that do not directly support the men and women in the military.

Let me point out one more disturbing aspect of the DOD portion of this bill. I understand from an exchange between my staff and the staff of the Senate Appropriations Committee that the committee is appropriating only "top-line dollar amounts" in this bill and not providing the customary tables, which is the description for each account, which outline the specifics of what is being funded. Instead, I have learned that the committee plans to communicate directly with the Office of the Secretary of Defense on funding levels in specific items.

I do not have a problem with the Appropriations Committee providing a top-line dollar amount to the Pentagon and allowing the Secretary of Defense to fund our national security priorities as he sees fit. I am deeply concerned about the lack of transparency associated with this plan. I hope it is not a way to get around the earmark moratorium currently in place in both Houses. If a Member of Congress is dictating, through the Appropriations Committee, the use of scarce defense funds, it is an earmark, even if it was done over the phone. I urge the Department of Defense to not view such communications as law or a mandate.

As I noted earlier, in addition to the misallocation of defense resources, this so-called deal uses typical Washington smoke-and-mirror tactics to achieve savings. According to expert analysis and numerous press reports, the agreement reached by negotiators last week used some of the same budget tricks and gimmickry that have helped us to accumulate our current deficit of \$1.4 trillion and a debt of over \$14.3 trillion.

Yesterday, in an article by Andrew Taylor of the Associated Press, it was reported that details of last week's hard-won agreement to avoid a government shutdown and cut Federal spending by \$38 billion were released Tuesday morning. They reveal that the budget cuts, while historic, were significantly eased by pruning money left over from previous years using accounting sleight of hand and going after programs President Obama had targeted anyway. The article also noted that details of the agreement "reveal a lot of one-time savings and cuts that officially score as cuts to pay for spending elsewhere, but often have little or no impact on the deficit."

Additionally, an editorial appeared in today's Wall Street Journal titled "Spending Cut Hokus: GOP leaders hyped their budget savings." In part, the editorial states:

After separating out the accounting gimmicks and one-year savings, the actual cuts look to be closer to \$20 billion than to the \$38 billion that both sides advertized. But the continuing resolution also saves money on paper through phantom cuts. The whopper is declaring \$6.2 billion in savings by not spending money left from the 2010 Census. Congress also cuts \$4.9 billion from the Justice Department's Crime Victims Fund, but much of that money was tucked away in a reserve fund that would not have been spent this year in any event.

The budgeteers claim \$630 million in cuts from what are called "orphan earmarks," or construction that never started, and \$2 billion more for transportation projects, some of which were likely to be canceled. The Associated Press reports that \$350 million in savings comes from a 2009 program to pay dairy farmers to compensate for low milk prices. Milk prices are higher this year, so some of that money also would never have been spent.

An estimated \$17 billion comes from one-time savings in mandatory programs. The cuts are real, but the funding gets restored by law the next year, which means Republicans will have to refight the same battles. States lose some \$3.5 billion in bonus money to enroll more kids in the Children's Health Insurance Program, but many states failed to qualify for that extra funding. These cuts don't reduce the spending baseline, so there are no compound savings over time.

None of this is enough to defeat the budget at this point, but it is infuriating given the GOP leadership's flogging of that \$38 billion top-line figure.

Is that the best we can offer the American people right now? In these tough economic times, with record debt and deficits and 8.8 percent unemployment, we give them smoke and mirrors, budget gimmickry, and accounting sleight of hand. Our government is bloated and precious taxpayer dollars are squandered in nearly every agency. You can't pick up a newspaper or go online without seeing reports of waste and duplication throughout Federal bureaucracies. I am pleased some real cuts have been made, but we need to do much more. This deal does little to address the very serious fiscal issues we face as a nation.

I hope as we address the next crisis, which will be, obviously, as we reach the debt limit, that we will have more

serious plans. I also believe it is vitally important, before we raise the debt limit, that we can put this Nation on a path to a balanced budget. We cannot afford to continue to borrow 40 cents out of every dollar we spend in Washington. We cannot afford, as the commercial that many of us have seen on television, to have the Chinese own America's money, and the United States be in such debt that China has an increasing and unhealthy influence on the United States.

I intend to vote for this agreement. I believe we could have done a lot better, but it is a step in the right direction. It is the first time we have made serious efforts to reduce spending in quite a number of years around here. I hope it will serve as something that the American people can support and spur us on to greater efforts in the coming weeks and months.

I notice the presence of the majority leader, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I say to my good friend from Arizona, we came to the House of Representatives together, came to the Senate together. When we came here, we both had the same service except the State of Arizona had more people than the State of Nevada, so he is one step ahead of me in seniority. I appreciate my friend's statement.

Mr. MCCAIN. That is in the eye of the beholder. I thank the Senator.

Mr. REID. I appreciate my friend's statement. He and I are both going to vote for this piece of legislation for different reasons, but as I have said publicly and privately, there have been very few people in the history of our country who have served our country so valiantly in battle and in the government than JOHN MCCAIN. Even though we have disagreed on a number of issues over the years, my admiration for him will always be there.

(Mr. WHITEHOUSE assumed the chair.)

RENO AIRPORT INCIDENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as the country learned today, certainly we learned in Nevada, there was a terrifying close call at the Reno airport last night. It is a miracle that everyone is OK today, and we are grateful they are.

This is what happened. Only one air traffic controller was in the tower during last night's overnight shift. Medical aircraft carrying a critically ill passenger couldn't land because the controller fell asleep on the job. We now know that the pilot circled several times. We now know that he tried to call the tower not once, not twice, but seven times. The controller slept through every one of the calls. He slept through the circling of the aircraft.

More than 15 minutes later, with the passenger critically ill in the airplane, minutes during which no one could reach the air traffic controller while

this critically ill passenger suffered in that aircraft, the pilot landed without any guidance from the airport.

The Reno airport is situated right below the great Sierra Nevada Mountains. It is an extremely difficult place to land. Those of us who have been landing there for all these years know how terribly rough it is many times coming out of there with the winds coming off the Sierras. To think this pilot was forced to land without any control on the land is very scary.

This should not happen in Nevada. It should not happen anywhere in the country. It shouldn't happen in any airplane, and it certainly shouldn't happen to an air ambulance.

Just a short time ago, I spoke with Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood. I am very happy he is acting, and acting quickly, to make sure this never happens again in Reno or anywhere else. We know we had an experience a few weeks ago right here in Washington, DC, the same type of situation.

Why did it happen? Reno was one of 27 airports across the country that sometimes had only one air traffic controller on the overnight shift. Because of Secretary LaHood's quick action, there will now be zero—effective immediately, every airport will have at least two air traffic controllers in the tower at any given time.

As I indicated, I have flown into and out of that airport many times. In October I was there for a celebration. We were opening a new control tower. It was very badly needed. From the old one, you couldn't see parts of the runway. When Reno's old control tower was built, Dwight Eisenhower was President and the Dodgers were in Brooklyn. In the half century since, the area's population has more than tripled. So it was fitting, we said at the time, that the airport open a control tower three times as tall as the old one.

Last night's near tragedy reminds us that state-of-the-art structures and the best technology work only as well as the people operating them. If these people fall asleep on the job, literally, they risk the lives of millions of Americans flying into and out of airports every day.

Secretary LaHood and Randy Babbitt, FAA Administrator, are doing their jobs. I appreciate their responsiveness and share their outrage that this ever happened, but Congress also has a key role to play. We have to do our jobs.

The Senate passed a bill in February to modernize America's air travel. With that legislation we created or saved 280,000 jobs. It would improve aviation safety and protect travelers, and that is an understatement. It would even help reduce delays, improve access to rural communities, and it would do all this while creating jobs.

The Republican House also passed a companion bill a few days ago, but the House bill is almost the opposite of

ours. It is dangerous. It doesn't protect passengers, it imperils passengers. The Republican bill would cut the modern navigation systems at our Nation's airports. It is hard to comprehend—an FAA bill, to which we have had to give short-term extensions—I don't know exactly the number of times but like 14 different times—now we are going to try to pass a bill that doesn't modernize our navigation systems at our airports. That would be wrong.

The FAA said the House bill would force it to furlough safety-related employees—not just any employees but those whose primary job is keeping air travel safe. That doesn't make any sense. It would also keep airports from making the infrastructure improvements they need and would completely end the program that ensures rural communities—in small towns such as Ely, NV—have air service.

The Senate-passed bill and the House-passed bill are now in conference to work out the differences. Clearly, there are a lot of differences. The conferees have some choices to make, and they are important, but they need to make them quickly so that both Houses can pass this bill and send it to the President, and do it quickly.

This bill passed on a huge bipartisan vote. Again, we are grateful everyone in Reno is OK, but the next time we may not be so fortunate. Let's make our airports and our travel as safe as possible as soon as possible so the next time we don't have to rely on luck. That is what it was.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE BUDGET

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I suppose I and a lot of my colleagues had an opportunity to hear the President's speech this afternoon. It is very nice that the President is being engaged for the first time in the budget debate and the long-term fiscal problems of this country, and the deficit problems of this country. It is good he is following on with some of the recommendations of his own deficit reduction commission. We have to remember a little less than a year ago he appointed a deficit reduction commission. They reported on December 5. It seems as though they had broad bipartisan support because the four Senators on the commission—two Democrats and two Republicans with probably very different political philosophies of the four—have endorsed it. Then, all of a sudden, since December 5 until today, there has been a lot of quiet on the part of the President of the United States about whether he